



AUSTRALIAN DRIVERS RIGHTS ASSOCIATION INC.

1st March 2005

Assistant Police Commissioner
Tim Atherton
C/- Police HQ
2 Adelaide Terrace
Perth 6000

Dear Assistant Commissioner Atherton,

Safety Warning Systems and Radar Detectors

I am writing with regard to your comments on talk back radio on Thursday 24th February 2005 concerning the use of radar detectors in WA. ADRA is an advocacy group representing over 10,000 members, predominantly responsible drivers and industry members from WA.

Since 2002 ADRA has been supporting the implementation and use of the Safety Warning System on Western Australian roads. SWS transmitters send a radar message of potential road hazards up to 1 km away. These warning messages are currently being received by up to 60,000 WA drivers equipped with a Driver Warning System (radar detector).

A ban on the use of driver warning systems (radar detectors) in WA, as you mentioned in the radio program, would make the Safety Warning System useless. There is however no evidence that we have found, to show that such a ban would have any positive impact on road safety.

I also refer to your concerns about the visual distraction of windscreen-mounted driver warning systems. I wish to confirm that all Driver Warning Systems (RD) sold in WA that are windscreen mounted, are all voice warning enabled and have the facility to turn off the LED display. This should eliminate any visual distraction to the driver.

Prior to our involvement with the SWS, we carefully evaluated the effectiveness of the SWS utilising Driver Warning Systems (Radar Detectors).

- Monash University was contracted to research any adverse studies on the use of radar detectors around the world. They found that there were no credible reports that proved that RD's allowed drivers to speed, that they had more accidents or that they had a negative impact on road safety.
- The Transport Safety Bureau advised that the banning of RD's in the Eastern States had no impact on road safety.
- The Federal Courts in the USA overturned a ban on Radar Detectors in the USA in 1995. They found no evidence to support the proposition that RD's were a road safety hazard or had any detrimental impact on the speed of drivers. The Appeals Court upheld the decision. RD's remain legal in the USA today.
- In 1997 the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found from a study of radar detector use that "the conclusion cannot be reached that detector users drive faster than they would without detectors."

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- In 1998 the Speed Management Task Force setup by the WA Government twice evaluated a ban on radar detectors in WA. I enclose their response which states that “The Task Force see no advantage in amending the Road Traffic Act to ban the use of radar detectors in WA” “ their impact on overall road safety is not seen as significant”
- Our research on the effectiveness of radar detectors in WA in 2002, confirmed that they were ineffective in detecting laser speed cameras. They were also found to be unreliable in detecting radar speed cameras because of false alerts. Our study found an average of 42 false alarms were recorded between speed camera detection. A radar detector cannot discern a difference between a speed camera and any other radar-emitting device.
- Studies from the USA, UK and Australia report that false alerts made drivers check their speed and made them more aware of the posted speed limit.
- All radar detectors sold in WA are equipped with SWS technology.
- A study by the Virginia Department of Transport in 1997 found that the use of drone radar (SWS) in freeway work zones reduced the mean speed of traffic by 3 to 4 miles per hour and 4 to 6 miles per hour when used in conjunction with digital display signs.
- SWS gained support in the USA and the Federal Government invested \$2.1 million into its expansion.

Following our research in 2002, much time, effort and resources have been allocated to improving road safety in WA through the implementation of the SWS.

Thanks to the generous support of the various industries involved, we have recently installed **SWS** transmitters along the **New Metro Rail project**, on the Perth freeway sites. This will provide up to a kilometres warning to approaching drivers with Driver Warning Systems, of the road construction hazard ahead. This will help to protect the “at risk” workers and road users. The New Metro Rail project is the largest public infrastructure project ever undertaken by the Government, and we are proud to be able to assist in increasing the road safety around these sites.

I am also pleased to advise that the **Advance Life Ambulances** vehicles based in Rockingham, have been equipped with SWS transmitters. These contain two radar emitted voice and led messages, “**Warning, stationary emergency vehicle ahead**” and “**Warning, emergency vehicle in transit**”.

Along with these projects, the SWS is being utilized on all new **St Johns Ambulance** vehicles, some **FESA** emergency vehicles, Tow Trucks, Traffic Management Vehicles and electronic arrow boards. At the same time, the total number of vehicles equipped with SWS receivers (driver warning detectors) in use within Western Australia is estimated to be over **60,000 vehicles**, mainly professional, responsible drivers who spend the majority of their time on the road. They would account for **1 in 10** vehicles on the roads at any time.

We have received numerous letters of thanks and support from organizations affected by this Road Safety Project. This includes Unions, traffic management companies, the **St Johns Ambulance** and road users. It was also endorsed at the **CFMEU** Australian work safety conference because of its effectiveness in providing advanced warning to drivers of Road and Construction crews. Most **Traffic**



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Management Companies in WA endorse and support the use of SWS to make **work zones safer**. We have had meetings with **WorkSafe** officers to identify more opportunities for the SWS to protect at risk workers and drivers.

I enclose some of the letters of support and commendation from senior government Ministers such as

- **Minister for Police and Emergency Services** Michelle Roberts,
- **Minister for Health** Jim McGinty,
- **Minister for Consumer and Employment Protection** John Kobelke,
- **Shadow Minister for Transport and Road Safety** Katie Hodson – Thomas.

Prior to the latest election, both the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and Shadow Minister for Transport and Road Safety **voiced their support for the SWS** and assured our members that their elected Government **would not obstruct** the effectiveness of the SWS system in WA during the term of their next government.

Because of the overall acceptance and effectiveness of SWS in WA, ADRA has committed more resources to the **further expansion** of the SWS system in this state. This innovative technology is continuing to make the roads of Western Australia a safer place. This is in line with the aims of responsible government. It is also making Western Australia a national leader in **privately funded** and supported **road safety projects**.

If you have any queries or require any further information, documentation or studies please don't hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Glenn Secco
President, ADRA

Stay Alert, Don't speed, Drive safe,